

LEOLA;

THE MYSTERIOUS RANGER.

A Tale of the Mexican War.

By S. Hamilton Varnum.

It was, therefore, with a sympathetic attention that the two soldiers, so different in age, approached the house where dwelt the object of their quest.

As they reached the steps of the porch, however, Travis paused. The house was swept in perfect gloom; not a light was to be seen; the blinds were closed from top to bottom, and everything was a deserted and silent scene.

Travis advanced, and rang the bell. No answer was returned; an ominous silence reigned within. A deadly fear seized hold of the brave Texas Captain. In that moment he recalled all the incidents of his last night with Leola—the premonition and prophecy of evil.

The presence of the Grey Monk at the moment of their parting, and the bitter scene which took place—all rose up before him. He pulled the bell cord more, with the same result.

"They seem to be snugly here," he heard in his mind, "and Kit, who seemed to have the appearance of Travis' tale-tale countenance?"

"Kit," said the Captain, in a low, choking voice.

"What is he, Cap'n?"

"Our pretty boys are gone—they have again been carried off."

"No, no, don't say that, Cap'n," said Kit, in a laughing tone. "At least, don't say it just yet; I can't stand the idea, I reckon. Run once more."

"This is a case," said Travis, almost jerking the handle from his fastening.

The bell was heard to tinkle lightly within, but no one came to answer the summons.

"I told you," said Travis, "of the scene which passed in the garden on the night previous to our leaving the city. I knew that the old monk had some devilry at work, but could form no conjecture of his scheme. It is clear enough now. He has induced Leola's devoted aunt to leave the city, and she, poor girl, was compelled to accompany her or be friendless. She is gone; where?"

"By, she's just what I'd like to know," said Kit. "Come that Grey Monk! If ever I get him within range of my 'Duffie-balls,' I'll make him wish he'd never met Kit Gaden."

"Woe," muttered Travis. "By Heaven! I must have an answer to that question before I leave this city! Come."

"Don't Americans?" said a soft voice, behind them, as they started from the house.

Travis turned quickly, and beheld a young girl of pensive form and large dark eyes, standing in the shadow of the porch.

"Who?" he exclaimed, as he recognized the little boy of the church at San Juan.

"He! he! you were looking for some one!" he replied, with an arch, coquettish smile.

"You, Leola—where is she?"

"Come," said the girl, with much solemnity.

"That I know; but where?" he asked impatiently.

"Far away," she replied, with enigmatical ambiguity.

"For God's sake! cease this childish boydom, and tell me! There's a pistol for you," said Travis, holding out a pistol.

The girl took the coin, and stooping down, rattled it on the cobble pavement, as though to give it emphasis; then, as if satisfied of its value, she turned, and straightened herself up, and said:

"City of Mexico."

"What?" cried Travis. "Do you mean to say that she has gone to the Capital?"

The girl nodded assent.

"Who took her there?"

"The Grey Monk."

"Ah! then my conjecture was right. Did he not accompany her?"

"Leola the girl nodded.

"Vio," he said, presently, "you are shrewd and clever, and know more than some who have older heads. Tell me—who is this Grey Monk? Is he—?" he bent down and whispered in her ear.

The girl started—turned red and pale by turns—then she clung her little hands, she exclaimed:

"How do you know that? Who told you?"

"She ground her teeth with rage; her eyes flashed fire, her nostrils quivered, and her little frame shook as with volcanic passion; Travis gazed upon her with surprise. It seemed impossible that one so small could be possessed of such overwhelming power. He was obliged to shake her off, for her fingers seemed to eat into his arm.

"Poor child!" he said, soothingly, "I pity you!"

"I am not poor child, and I don't want your pity!" she cried, supporting herself against the porch.

"Take your money!" she said, and she pulled the pistol into the street.

Seeing that he had aroused her evil passions to such a degree that it would be useless longer to parley with her, Travis turned slowly away, and walked down the street.

"That's what I call a regular young cater-mountain," said Kit, when they had got beyond hearing.

"Wee! I am a human devil," muttered Travis, stopping and looking back, "I could read the hearts of some men, whom we think have no secrets to tell. But no, my revenge cannot go so far; my vengeance cannot harm that child!"

The next morning the troops resumed their march toward the mouth of the Rio Grande. But there were two that started, who were not with them—Captain Travis and his individual companion, Kit Gaden. By some mysterious and unaccountable means, they had been placed on the sick list at Camargo!

The troops, after a few days rest, were conveyed by transport to San Juan de los Rios, miles northwest of Vera Cruz, where Gen. Scott's forces awaited them, and thence the whole army of twelve thousand men proceeded to Antonio Ligeras, a point a short distance from this city.

It is not for the romantic to take up the pen of the historian, and deal with the events of the day of which he writes, by the mathematical rule of the chronicle. The general reader desires to have the thread of fiction suddenly snapt off by a detailed account of a battle, especially when the characters which have elicited his greatest interest are not participants in the scene.

It is needless then for us to recapitulate the incidents of that brilliant achievement which commanded the admiration of the world—the capture and capture of Vera Cruz. Neither is it important upon us to follow the footsteps of the hero—General Scott, as he conquers the army, as he marched toward the great capital of the Montezuma. Old and more exciting scenes followed, and, with the reader's permission, we will leave the army and follow the lead of the story.

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